

*** VERSION SHOWING CHANGES MADE ***

CLAIMS

Having thus set forth the nature of the invention, what is claimed herein is:

1. (Currently Amended) ~~In a~~ A tufting machine comprising: a plurality of aligned needles arranged to reciprocate in a direction which, in use, is perpendicular to a backing material which is progressively fed through the machine; a hook associated with each needle which is oscillatedly moveable, in use, to pick up yarn from its associated needle, a loop engaging surface of the hook being, ~~in use, at least 50 mm~~ below the backing material; wherein each tuft is isolated from a tuft formed by an adjacent needle by a divider plate which extends in the direction of needle reciprocation for at least 20% of the distance between the backing material and the loop engaging surface of the hooks with each divider plate extending from at least one of read fingers of a needle plate and a support block connected to a bed plate located below the needle plate.
2. (Currently Amended) A tufting machine according to claim 1, wherein each divider plate extends for at least 30% ~~and preferably at least 50%~~ of the distance between the backing material and the loop engaging surface of the hook.
3. (Original) A machine according to claim 1, wherein each divider plate extends for up to 80% of the distance between the backing cloth and the loop engaging surface of the hook.

4. (Currently Amended) A machine according to claim 2 6, wherein each divider plate extends for up to 80% of the distance between the backing cloth and the loop engaging surface of the hook.
5. (Cancelled)
6. (Currently Amended) In a tufting machine comprising a plurality of aligned needles arranged to reciprocate in a direction which, in use, is perpendicular to a backing material which is progressively fed through the machine; a hook associated with each needle which is oscillatedly moveable, in use, to pick up yarn from its associated needle, a loop engaging surface of the hook being, in use, at least 50 mm below the backing material; wherein each tuft is isolated from a tuft formed by an adjacent needle by a divider plate which extends in the direction of needle reciprocation for at least 20% of the distance between the backing material and the loop engaging surface of the hooks with each divider plate extends from at least 30% of a distance between the backing material and the loop engaging surface of the hook; and further comprising ~~A tufting machine according to claim 2, including~~ a needle plate having a series of reed fingers and each divider plate is an extension of a respective reed finger.
7. (Cancelled)

8. (Cancelled)
9. (Currently Amended) In a tufting machine comprising; a plurality of aligned needles arranged to reciprocate in a direction which, in use, is perpendicular to a backing material which is progressively fed through the machine; a hook associated with each needle which is oscillatedly moveable, in use, to pick up yarn from its associated needle, a loop engaging surface of the hook being, in use, at least 50 mm below the backing material; wherein each tuft is isolated from a tuft formed by an adjacent needle by a divider plate which extends in the direction of needle reciprocation for at least 20% of the distance between the backing material and the loop engaging surface of the hooks with each divider plate extends from at least 30% of a distance between the backing material and the loop engaging surface of the hook; and further comprising ~~A tufting machine according to claim 2,~~ having a needle plate including a series of reed fingers between each pair of which a needle reciprocates, a bed plate located beneath the needle plate, and a support block carried by the bed plate and the divider plates extend from the support block.
10. (Cancelled)
11. (Cancelled)
12. (Cancelled)
13. (Cancelled)

14. (Currently Amended) A tufting machine as recited in claim ~~5~~6, wherein said divider plate is enlarged at an end adjacent said hooks relative to an end adjacent said needle plate.
15. (Currently Amended) A tufting machine as recited in claim ~~11~~9, wherein said divider plate is enlarged at an end spaced remote from said hooks relative to an end adjacent said hooks.